

Nevada Organic Review

Nevada's Certified Organic Community ~ Growing For You

January, 2005

Winter ~ Spring

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The Nevada Organic Review will be
published twice in 2005. **Sponsored
by the NV Agriculture Council.**

Editor / Advertising Coordinator

Virginia Johnson, 3701 Elm Street
Silver Springs, NV 89429
775.577.2069

customgardens@mindspring.com

Mailing, Distribution,

and assistance provided by Peggy
McKie - NDOA

350 Capitol Hill Ave, Reno NV 89502
775.688.1182 x 243

pgmckie@govmail.state.nv.us

Note: While striving to print only
current and timely information, the
above public/private parties are not
responsible for content.

Nevada Organic Review ~ Returns

After a few months with no Nevada Organic Review to cheer you on, the newsletter is back in print with this Winter-Spring edition -- and the promise of *at least* a Summer-Fall issue to be published mid-year.

The NOR newsletter is in print because of help from the Nevada Agriculture Council (NAC). NAC deserves a big thank you for committing funding to cover expenses for two issues in 2005. It is free to everyone on the NOR mailing list. Call Peggy McKie at 775-688-1182 x 243 to be added the mailing list. You will note there has been a slight change in our presentation but the important thing is; you will find more information -- helpful to organic growers, plus articles interesting to all friends of the Nevada Certified Organic Program.

In an effort to build a fund for the continuation of the NOR, paid advertising and/or sponsorship donations, may be accepted for publication of the summer-fall and hopefully, 2006 and ongoing editions of the Nevada Organic Review. To inquire about advertising or contribute your farm's information and photos for your "Organic Profile" article, please contact the Editor, Virginia Johnson, at 775-577-2069.

Nevada Small Farm Conference Set For March

Tuesday, March 8 is the date set for an all day Nevada Small Farm Conference sponsored by the Nevada Department of Agriculture, Nevada Agriculture Council, the Nevada Certified Farmers Market Association and the Nevada Association of Counties.

To be held at the Sands Regency Hotel Casino, registration begins at 7:30 a.m. The conference is scheduled to get underway at 8:00 a.m. The daylong conference and various workshops will, *in part*, cover an interesting array of topics such as Season Extending, Soil Fertility, Market Management, Composting, Bee Keeping and Pollination.

Keynote speaker for the luncheon (included in registration) will be Dr. Gino Borges of Fernley, Nevada will present, "Don't ask a cow to analyze milk - philosophy for everyday human consumption".

Dr. Ron Godin, Colorado State University will conduct a session on an organic approach to "Building Soil Fertility" (sustainability for our sometimes cantankerous arid soils). Randii MacNear, Davis Farmer's Market Association, will present "Can you sell what you sow?"

Nevada's own successful and innovative small farmers, along with Craig Witt, of Full Circle Compost, in Minden, and managers from some of Nevada's most successful farmer's markets will be making presentations or conducting workshop sessions.

Conference...Continued on Page 2

Conference... Continued from Page 1

If you have not yet received your registration packet, you are encouraged to contact Peggy McKie, at the Nevada Department of Agriculture office in Reno 775.688.1182X x 243, or email to: pgmckie@govmail.state.nv.us.

The day will conclude at 5:00 pm, and be followed by a post conference reception, hors d'oeuvres, and a no-host bar.



Bradshaw's End of the Rainbow Apple Orchard

"End of the Rainbow Organic Apple Orchard" is named for its location: it lies at the southern end of beautiful Rainbow Canyon, in the south eastern corner of Nevada. The canyon, known for its spectacular scenery is located 105 miles north of Las Vegas near the town of Caliente.

Orchardist Don Bradshaw began planting apple trees over 20 years ago. The orchard is comprised of nearly 2000 trees of 4 varieties and lies in the canyon bottom along the creek, with rocky walls rising up on either side.

Across the road is a one-room schoolhouse, now lovingly restored, where Mr. Bradshaw's mother taught school and which Mr. Bradshaw attended. The schoolhouse is open to the public and tours can be arranged through Bradshaw.

In 1986, he began marketing his apples through an on-farm "U-Pick". His apples were also sold to a large processing firm to be turned into apple juice. When low-cost imported apple juice concentrate became more readily available in this country forcing prices down, Mr. Bradshaw needed to look for other ways to sell his crop. Now his sales are primarily through on-farm sales in September and October.

End of Rainbow Organic Apple Orchard offers 4 varieties of apples: Golden Delicious, Red Delicious, Winesap, and Jonathon. Its isolation makes it a great candidate for organic certification.

An established under-planting of meadow grasses provides weed control and creates an excellent habitat for beneficial insects and spiders (as well as wild turkeys, deer, and other wildlife). End of Rainbow Organic Apple Orchard is open for U-Pick beginning in early September when the Jonathans begin to ripen. Next in line are the Golden Delicious, followed at the end of September by Red Delicious and Winesaps.

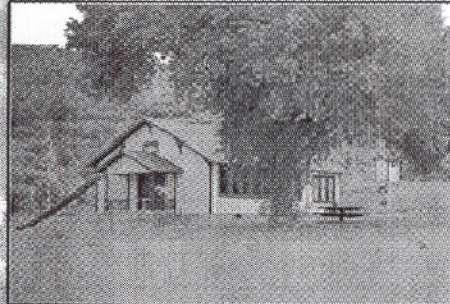
Be sure to bring containers to haul your apples home. Don't forget to bring a picnic lunch! Allow enough time to explore the canyon and visit the old school house. For directions to the orchard, and to check on availability and U-Pick hours, call Don Bradshaw (775) 726-3373.

Rainshadow CCHS Students ~ Get Growing...

Last winter, a group of twelve students from Rainshadow Community Charter School took one look at the tough, sandy corner of a downtown vacant lot—in Reno—and said "no way." "No way are we going to be able to grow things here", said sixteen-year-old student Mark Moon.

The view was one of beat-up cars, stored trailers, campers and boats. It was January, and the ground was hard and cold. The trees along the northeast side of the space looked barren and reluctant. Regardless, (Rainshadow... Continued on Page 7)

Bradshaw's End of the Rainbow Apple Orchard is located in Beautiful Rainbow Canyon



Visit the Schoolhouse where Mr. Bradshaw attended school and his mother taught.



Rainshadow students show off their bountiful harvest at the hoop-house.

SEED SAVING

The National Organic Standards require that organic farmers use certified organic seed to produce their crops. Finding organic seed of the right variety, quantity and quality is one of the more significant stumbling blocks for organic farmers. Many overcome this obstacle by saving their own seed to use for the next year's crops.

Saved seed should be protected from moisture, desiccation, insects and rodents. One way to do this is to store the seed in moisture-proof, rodent-proof, tightly sealed containers, protected from extremes in temperature. Needless to say, individual seed packets should also be labeled as to variety and date collected.

Before planting saved seed, it is wise to check when the seed was harvested and do a germination test. Information about recommended germination temperatures and germination times can be obtained from the company you purchased your seed from or references such as Park's Success with Seeds by Ann Reilly.

The following is from Growing for Market January 2003, used with permission.

HOW TO TEST LEFTOVER SEED

If you have seed left from previous years, you can easily test it to see if it's still viable. Consult the chart below to see whether its shelf life makes it likely to be viable. Bear in mind that the seed company you bought it from may have held it for more than one year.

Put 25 or 50 seeds on a double layer of *moistened* paper towels or muslin, roll them up loosely and label them. Put them in a glass baking dish and cover with plastic to keep them moist. Store at the recommended germination temperature for the time normally recommended for germination to occur. Unroll the bundle, count the number of seeds that have germinated and calculate the germination percentage (divide the number of seeds that germinated by the total number of seeds, multiply by 100).

Refer to the chart below to determine the germination rate you can expect from fresh seed (though many seed companies do exceed the minimum required germination rate). Then you can decide whether you should purchase new seed or use your old seed. You may even decide to use low-germinating seed and sow it more thickly than usual. Be aware though, that poor germination can be a harbinger of weak seedling.

Seed Longevity and Minimum Federal Germination Standards

Vegetable	Avg. Shelf Life (in yrs)	Federal Germination Standard	Vegetable	Avg. Shelf Life (in yrs)	Federal Germination Standard
Bean, lima	3	70%	Okra	2	50%
Bean, snap	3	75%	Onion	1-2	70%
Beets	4	65%	Parsley	2	60%
Broccoli / Brussels sprouts/cauliflower	5	75%	Parsnip	1-2	60%
Cabbage	5	75%	Pea	3	80%
Carrot	3	55%	Pepper	4	55%
Celeriac/Celery	5	55%	Pumpkin	4	75%
Chicory	5	65%	Radish	5	75%
Chinese Cabbage	5	75%	Rutabaga	5	75%
Cucumber	5	80%	Salisfy	2	75%
Eggplant	5	60%	Spinach	5	65%
Endive	5	70%	Squash	5	75%
Kale	5	75%	Sweet corn	1-2	75%
Kohlrabi	5	75%	Swiss chard	1-2	65%
Leek	3	60%	Tomato	4	75%
Lettuce	5	80%	Turnip	5	80%
Muskmelon	5	75%	Watermelon	5	80%
New Zealand Spinach	5	40%	Source: University of Nebraska Extension		

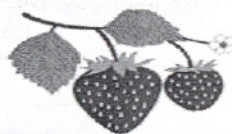
Organic Certification Cost Share

Organic Farmers Eligible for \$\$\$ Refund

The Organic Cost Share program is a national program established through the Agriculture Marketing Assistance bill (2002). The program provides certification cost-share funds to growers in 15 states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. Nevada has been participating in the program since 2002 and will continue to provide reimbursements for the 2004-2005 season.

In 2002 and 2003 there was \$1 million per year in cost share funds through AMA. In 2004 there was \$1 million more. In 2005 funds will again be available for the 15 eligible states, including Nevada. States apply for the funds and are responsible for dispersing them to eligible growers who apply to the states for reimbursement.

The program provides reimbursements up to a maximum of \$500.00 for a producer's organic certification costs. The Nevada Department of Agriculture is the agency responsible for the cost-share program in this state. Organic growers located in Nevada that are certified by the Department or by another USDA-accredited certifier are eligible to apply for the cost-share program. Contact Peggy McKie, Nevada Department of Agriculture, (775) 688-1182 extension 243.



Certified Organic Strawberry Stock Available In California:

CCOF has certified a California producer - the first in the nation to provide 100% organic strawberry planting stock. Prather Ranch says it is taking orders for nursery stock that will be available in the spring of 2005. For more information contact

rickertjames@yahoo.com. From IOIA's *The Inspector's Report, Summer 2004*

Interested in Teaching Organic Farming and Gardening?

A new teaching resource is now available online.

In spring of 1999 the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) awarded funding to The Center for Agro ecology and Sustainable Food Systems at the University of California-Santa Cruz (UCSC) to develop a training manual encompassing the basic skills and concepts taught in their "Farm and Garden Apprenticeship" program. The project's primary objective was to formalize the existing apprenticeship course curriculum and gather perspectives and training materials from other organic educators. OFRF seed money helped attract additional funders that resulted in an ambitious project involving 6 of the Farm and Garden's instructional staff, seven contributing authors, over a dozen reviewers, and almost a hundred apprentices. This training manual is being distributed nationwide, as is for sale in hard copy through UCSC or **downloadable for free from their website** at:

<http://zzyzx.ucsc.edu/casf/training/manual/contents/html>.

Please note that the text is 604 pages long. Paper copies can be ordered from the Center for Agro ecology and Sustainable Food Systems for \$45.00. Please email questions about ordering to:

TrainingManual@ucsc.edu.

(From Organic Farming Research Foundation Information Bulletin, winter 2004 Number 13)



Growing for Market's Virtual Farm Tours at

www.growingformarket.com

You'll find links to web sites of small farmers around the country. Want to list your farm's webpage? Send an email to: **growingformarket@earthlink.net**.

New websites will be added to the top of the list as they are received.

National Organic Program (NOP) Updates "National List"

Here is a summary of recent changes to the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances. Now is a good time to find your copy of the list and update it or download an updated copy NOP website:
www.ams.usda.gov/nop/NOP/standards/ListReg.html

From Organic Materials Review Institute's OMRI Update, Spring, 2004.

To the list of synthetic substances **allowed** for use in **crop** production (§ 205.601) was **added**:

- **Copper sulfate** as an algicide and for tadpole shrimp in rice production systems, with limited use. Additional restrictions on frequency of use.
- **Ozone gas** for use as an irrigation system cleaner only.
- **Peracetic acid** for use in disinfecting equipment, seed, and asexually propagated plant material. Also approved for use to control fire blight.

Additional **crop** production **changes** to §205.601:

- **EPA List 3 inert ingredients** (inerts of unknown toxicity) in pesticide formulations for use only in passive pheromone dispensers. Pheromones are now allowed "as insect management" rather than "insect attractants".
- **Hydrated lime** – the annotation "must be used in a manner that minimizes copper accumulation in the soil" has been removed for the listing of hydrated lime for use in plant disease control.
- The **word "gas" has been added** to the listing of **ethylene gas** for use as a plant growth regulator for regulation of pineapple flowering.

To the list of nonsynthetic (natural) substances **prohibited** for use in organic **crop** production (§ 205.602) was **added**:

- **Calcium chloride** prohibited for use except as a foliar spray to treat a physiological disorders associated with calcium uptake.
- **Sodium nitrate** prohibited unless use is restricted to no more than 20% of the crop's total nitrogen requirement.

To the list of synthetic substances **allowed** for use in organic **livestock** production (§205.603) was **added**:

- **DL-Methionine, DL-Methionine-hydroxy analog, and DL-methionine-hydroxy analog calcium** for use only as a feed additive in organic poultry production until October 21, 2005.

Additional livestock production changes to § 205.603

- **Chlorhexidine**: spelling was corrected
- **Hydrated lime**: listing was changed to read, "As external pest control, not permitted to cauterize physical alterations or deodorize animal wastes."
- **Copper sulfate and magnesium**: removed from the listing for trace minerals, so that the annotation now reads, "used for enrichment or fortification when FDA approved."

To the list of nonagricultural (nonorganic) substances **allowed** as ingredients in or on **processed products** labeled as "organic" or "made with organic ingredients" (§205.605) was **added**:

Allowed Nonsynthetic Substances -

- **Agar-agar**
- **Animal enzymes** – Rennet – animal derived; Catalase bovine liver; Animal lipase; Pancreatin; Pepsin, and Trypsin.
- **Calcium sulfate** – mined
- **Carageenan**
- **Glucono delta-lactone** – production by the oxidation of D-glucose with bromine water is prohibited.

Allowed Synthetic Substances –

- **Cellulose** – for use in regenerative casings, as an anti-caking agent (non chlorine bleach) and filtering aid.
- **Ethylene** – allowed for post harvest ripening of tropical fruit and degreening citrus.
- **Potassium hydroxide** – prohibited for use in lye peeling of fruits and vegetables except when used for peeling peaches during the Individually Quick Frozen (IQF) production process.
- **Tartaric Acid**

What's New?



NDOA CERTIFIED ORGANIC PRODUCERS & HANDLERS WINTER/SPRING 2005

Custom Gardens #1001P Ray and Virginia Johnson CSA, On-Farm Market, Sales to Chefs Vegetables, berries, fruits, herbs, flowers 3701 Elm Street, Silver Springs, NV 89429 customgardens@mindspring.com 775-577-2069	Leech Logistics #1020H Bill Kerr, Plant Manager Custom milling, grinding, packaging, blending 830 E Glendale Sparks NV 89431 775-352-2841	One Coyote Ranch #1033P Isadora and Susie Ramirez Alfalfa hay Direct sales 1100 Incan Rd - Winnemucca NV 89445 775-625-1044
Mewaldt's Organic Produce # 1003P On farm sales Bill and Korena Mewaldt 175 McLean Road Fallon NV 89406 Vegetables, berries, flowers, herbs, Dried plant products, seedlings bmewaldt@hotmail.com 775-867-3469	Ponderosa Dairy 1023P Dave Hall, Field Manager Fields certified by NDOA, herd by CCOF Forage, feed (dairy use only) PO Box 70 Amargosa Vly, NV 89020 775-372-1311	Nevada Soy Products #1036H Bob Rewinkle and MaryJo Rablin Darin Bloyd, Plant Manager Soybean meal and oil, livestock feeds Organic product transportation PO Box 1064 Lovelock, NV 89419 775-273-5463
Churchill Butte Horticulture & Marcia's Organic Produce # 1004P Steve and Marcia Litsinger PO Box 1096 Dayton NV 89403 CSA, Direct Sales by Arrangement Vegetables, seedlings, herbs Organic Farm Consulting 775-721-6068	Home Grown Nevada/ 4S Land & Cattle Jim and Tina Smith # 1024P Vegetables, cut flowers, herbs, livestock feed (alfalfa and oat hay, grains) CSA, farmer's markets, direct sales 100 Burke Drive Wellington NV 89444 jsbeef@earthlink.net 775-465-2549 Also: Natural, grass-fed beef	Duck Lake Ranch #1039P Bill Spoo - Ranch Manager Alfalfa hay 775-825-1888
End of the Rainbow Ranch #1005P Don Bradshaw U-Pick, wholesale, Fall Harvest Festival Apples (4 varieties) PO Box 422 Caliente NV 89008 775-726-3373	Valley Herb and Health # 1026P Brent and Irene Hauver Vegetables, herbs, vine and tree fruits Retail through own store, farmers markets PO Box 870 Overton NV 89040 775-397-8632	Winnemucca Farms #1042PH Processing Plant: Eric Beringer Field Manager: Carrie Wohleb Potatoes and other vegetables Wholesale 1 Potato Place Winnemucca NV 89445 775-623-2900 ericb@usfds.com
Saddleback Orchard # 1007PH Bill and Rita Barrackman Pistachios and pistachio processing Wholesale 775-372-5259 Rt. 69 Box 446 Amargosa Valley NV 89020 b.barrackman@worldnet.att.net	Lattin Farms #1029P Rick Lattin <i>Currently no organic production</i> 1955 McLean Rd Fallon NV 89406 775-867-3750 Contact for "Nevada Grown" information	Renfroe & Daughters Farming #1043P Rob and Melanie Renfroe Alfalfa hay Direct sales 1155 Westergard Rd Lovelock NV 89419 775-273-3021
Sunnybrook Farm #1012P Rod and Lori Monk Organic and Conventional alfalfa Direct sales HC 61 Box 182 Battle Mt, NV 89820 775-931-0124	Davidson's Tea, Inc. #1028H John and Sharon Davidson Organic teas Wholesale and catalog only; retail sales at warehouse 1X per year PO Box 11214 Reno NV 89510 tea@davidson.reno.nv.us	Ceballos Farms #1044P Carlos and Alicia Ceballos Alfalfa and oat hay - Direct sales 17000 Grass Valley Rd Winnemucca NV 89445 775-623-4893
McClintick Farms #1017PH Rick McClintick Alfalfa hay, seed conditioning plant Direct sales, seed conditioning PO Box 129 Orovada NV 89423 775-272-3284	Shenandoah Farms #1031P AJ Parks Alfalfa hay - Direct sales HC 61 Box 150 Battle Mt. NV 89820 775-931-0112	Sod-Buster Farm # 1045P Clifford and Debra Shirk Vegetables, vine berries Farmer's market, direct sales 4900 Amy Rd Reno NV 89510 775-475-0214
Industrial Sterilization #1019H Bill Lanning 775-356-5999 Ozone, heat, and steam sterilization 1225-101 E. Greg Sparks NV 89431	Garett Van Diest # 1032P Alfalfa hay Direct sales PO Box 867 Winnemucca NV 89446 775-623-1044	<i>Certification Pending:</i> Pete's Organic Wheatgrass (Las Vegas) Wheatgrass Farm (Las Vegas)

EDITOR'S NOTE:

For more information on the Rainshadow CCHS garden project please contact Abby Hutchinson at (775) 233-5566 or Marcia Litsinger at (775) 721-6068. Steve and Marcia Litsinger are owners of Churchill Butte Horticulture in Lyon County, Nevada. The Department of Agriculture certifies their organic farm

Calendar of Upcoming Events

February 4th

**Placer County Ag.
Marketing Niche Workshop**
Lincoln High School
<http://ceplacer.ucdavis.edu>

February 5th

**2005 Placer Grown Farm
Conference**
Lincoln, CA – 10 mi. north of
Roseville

call: 530-889-7385

www.placergrown.org
www.ceplacer.ucdavis.edu

March 9th

**Agritourism & Nature
Tourism: Harvesting the
Assets of Your Farm or Ranch
Workshop**, at Graeagle
Firehouse, 8:30 am -3:30 pm.
Pre-Register by February 25th for
only \$25, otherwise, \$40 at the
door. Phone: 530/283-6262
(direct),
Email: hageorge@ucdavis.edu

March 23rd – 24th

**California Agriculture
Symposium**
Sacramento, CA.
www.calagsymposium.org
(register early – limited to 300)

April 1st -2nd

**The New Food
Entrepreneur: Value-
Added Processing
Conference**
Auburn Washington - Green
River Community College
<http://csanr.wsu.edu/calendar>

(Rainshadow... Continued from Page 2)

the students got out some shovels, pitch forks and building materials and started preparing the land for growing.

Organic gardening mentors Steve and Marcia Litsinger guided the group through the process of beginning an organic garden. With the help of the City of Reno, the University of Nevada, Reno, and other community business donations, the students worked to mix nutrient-rich organic compost. The students built a hoop-house and raised beds and began to plan for a spring and summer organic garden. In late January, the Litsingers brought Jerusalem artichoke tubers and the students planted their first crop.

Meanwhile, with the help of Rainshadow staff members, Phillip Parker, Abby Hutchinson and Ryan Bixenmann, the organic garden project was linked to curriculum. The students were learning about soil chemistry, architecture, mapping, plant physiology, nutrition and biology. They kept journals, making sketches and preparing press releases and presentation boards about their project.

As more community members became interested and supportive the farm, class prepared to spend the summer harvesting and selling the produce at local farmers markets. The students also made plans to use the school-grown produce to feed their own students at Rainshadow and for community members in need. The project has been slowly turning into a true community garden.

By late spring, the garden was bursting with color—vibrant green from the tomato plants, deep purple amaranth, and yellow sun-choke flowers. In the process, the staff members found a whole set of challenges and problems for the students to tackle: a watering system and schedule, organic pest control and harvesting.

Currently, the students are building a second hoop-house and preparing another batch of organic compost. The School is looking at other vacant lots around the city, spending time in hopes of acquiring new land to create a system of community gardens.

Rainshadow Community Charter High School is a small community-based school serving high-risk youth. The school programs emphasize interdisciplinary curriculum and service with a mission to engage students in active learning through hands-on community projects.

Internet Places

Add your farm to the farm locator to help sell your farm product, check OPX market prices or place a classified ad, free: **Rodale's The New Farm**
www.newfarm.org

Create your farm profile to help customers find you – free: **Local Harvest** www.localharvest.org



Patrick shows off the last of the organic grape harvest at Custom Gardens Organic Farm.

EDITORS NOTE:

Patrick is 31, a graduate of Spring Hill College and Gonzaga University School of Law. Still a single man, he hopes one day to marry and have his own family. Patrick works for the State of Nevada as a Judicial Clerk, in Reno, where he lives. His future goals include: Owning his own small farm or ranch, where he could pursue his interests in viticulture and rearing bison.

Patrick served as a farm intern during the 2004 spring to fall season at Custom Gardens Organic Farm in Silver Springs. Owners, Ray and Virginia Johnson say Patrick is eager and hard working "a dependable young man, with a promising future, be-it lawyer, farmer-rancher, or both." He has remained in touch, still anxious to "do something". To continue to help out on weekends, he will be joining the Johnsons for 2005 main season planning sessions during the early winter months. For more information, call the farm at 775-577-2069.

For more of Patrick's writings about his last season's experiences at Custom Gardens, look in the archives of Rodale's www.newfarm.org for his series of articles under Intern Journals.

Farm Intern Answers ... Why

There's a scenario that keeps playing itself out over and over again in my life. There are variations, of course, but it almost always follows the same script.

It usually starts with someone I know asking me if I want to do something on an upcoming weekend (go snowboarding, see a concert, just hang out, etc.). I will politely tell them no, thanks, I'm busy this Saturday. Then comes the inevitable question. "Busy doing what?" I try to put it as simply as possible. "I work on an organic farm in Silver Springs on weekends."

This is always followed up by the next obvious question. "What do you do that for?" But out of politeness, or perhaps a half-alive hope for understanding, I always at least make some effort at explaining why I spend the weekends farming; I usually start with the material reward.

I explain that every week I put in five hours of work; I'm rewarded with a bag full of fresh, organic vegetables, fruits and berries at no cost. In a materialistic society such as our, a profit motive seems to be the one that makes the most sense to people. But often that doesn't do it.

The next reason I offer up is usually health. Despite all the fad diets and magic weight-loss formulas running around these days, the old advice is still the best: Eat a well-balanced diet that's heavy on vegetables and fruit. The less you food is processed, the healthier it is, and Organic food is simply the safest, freshest, tastiest food out there. This second explanation is enough to satisfy most of my remaining questioners. But there are those for whom this rationale does not adequately explain why I would give up essentially a whole day off to drive an hour and a half out into the desert to toil under the hot sun.

There is a third answer, deeper and more honest than the others, but I usually hesitate to mention it because it not only doesn't make sense to most people, but it can even leave them with the impression that I am something of a strange bird.

The truth is, I love to farm. I love to watch things grow. I love to stand out in the sun and bring forth nature's bounty through my toil and sweat and the benevolence of the earth. I would do it even if I received no physical reward, even if healthy, safe food were available everywhere. I do it for the sheer enjoyment of it, because it makes me feel whole and human and part of the greater whole of Creation. Nothing else in my work-a-day world comes close to making me feel so connected with the natural cycles of the planet, the cycles which not only sustain us, but which have shaped us into what we are.

This explanation rarely satisfies those people who question me. If one needs to question the activity, the answer will probably not make sense. If the answer is one that the questioner can understand and appreciate, the question "why do you work at an organic farm on the weekends" probably never has to be asked in the first place.